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THE FUTURE OF DECISION: GOVERNANCE, ALGORITHMS, AND COGNITIVE BIAS

BIOPOLITICS,
NECROPOLITICS

ALGORITHMIC GOVERNANCE, BARBARISM, BIOPOLITIK POSTMODERNER KÖRPER, CAPITAL,
CAPITALISM, NEUROSCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY

Berardi makes a valid point in his critique of Smicek and Williams Inventing the Future:

"Smicek and Williams suggest that we should 'demand full automation, demand universal basic income, demand reduction of the work week'. But they do not explain who the recipient is of these demands. Is there any governing volition that can attend to these requests and implement them?"

No, because governance has taken the place of government, and command is no longer inscribed in political decision but in the concatenation of techno-linguistic automatisms. This is why demands are pointless, and why building political parties is pointless as well."

Governance is ubiquitous, invisible, and decentralized within the networks itself now, power is part of the very interactive environment we face daily. The moment you open your iPhone, etc. you're confronted with a governed set of choices and possibilities that capture your desires and modulate those very choices through sophisticated and ubiquitous algorithms. Same for almost every aspect of our once sacrosanct private lives, too. Our homes in the coming decades will be invasively programmed with ubiquitous smart devices that will attune us to techno-commercial decisioning processes out of our control, and yet they will allow us to still believe it is we who are choosing, deciding, using our oh so ingrained "free will" – that as many neuroscientists keep telling us is an illusion, delusion, a cognitive bias and hereditary error of judgment, etc.

If Edward Bernays opened the door on mass manipulation through the use of images, sound, and print... our new world of smart devices will no longer need to manipulate us, they will decide for us and let us think that it we alone have made our choices independent of any external agent not knowing that this very thought of independence was the manipulation by algorithmic governance. Manipulation by design that allows the participant to fool herself. In this way we've reversed the earlier public relations need to externally manipulate our environment with images, sound bytes, and eye candy: now we will internalize this whole process and believe we alone are in charge of our choices, making rational and deliberate decisions while all along these

are coming to us ubiquitously through pattern matching algorithms so accelerated we will not know they are not our own thoughts. Predictive engineering so fast and based on our own neuroscientific process that we will not be able to tell the difference. Like the street magician who seems to float on air, or produce strange objects from one's own person, this new world of virtual precision will act at a distance and manipulate the very biases of our own cognitive powers.

Our very thought processes and reason are being reformatted by the instruments and technologies we use daily, and not realizing this we assume absolute independence of judgement over our lives while instead it is these very tools that have become so invisible and ubiquitous in our lives that are rewiring our very cognitive machinery and delivering us to a governing power so ubiquitous that it has become internalized as the very core of our own sense of Agency. Essentially we are reprogrammed as androids or robots in a machinic society in which our very humanity is itself faked and manipulated for the benefit of the power elite. But this is not the power elite of old, no as AGI comes online in more and more stable and ubiquitous forms the very truth of power will reside within this inhuman network through the global interfaces of decisions we ourselves will so gladly accept. An inversion of human power into machinic systems is taking place even as we enjoy the comforts and leisure of our toys.

People speak of a post-work society and do not realize it is already in the offing, every text message you send, every web page you access, every time you access data from anywhere or pass information across the network you are allowing profits to be extracted by some invisible entity, some corporation, or government agency. Our lives of leisure have become the very site of a 24/7 profit machine in which we not only do not know we're participating, but are gladly allowing it and enjoying it as pleasure and jouissance. We have entered the true age of leisure capitalism. Some will still work and maintain machines, etc. for a long while during the transitional process of the coming decades, while many on the planet will become unnecessary to the process and like other machines and products be obsolesced. The horror is that we have become the total product of leisure capitalism. Our very lives are the engines of profit and we will live out our existence enjoying the minor aspects of our mindless existence not even knowing that we've been enslaved in a system of surplus value so ubiquitous that no one except the benefactors know it exists.

Even the staged conflicts and wars will be planned and bound by this same governance process. The nations will appear to be enemies in images and simulated dramas of staged operatic forms in the media-tainment industry while all the while behind the scenes the great powers are working for the same global corporations. Orwell had part of this already figured out, as did Aldous Huxley... now we do. But will we wake up long enough to disconnect? I doubt it...

Yet, with the emergence of cryptocurrencies, blockchain technology, and the various aspects of a neo-market bound to secrecy and darkness, underground resistances and pockets of awakening can become possible... we will follow this trail in time... As Adam Winfield relates it:

The rise of cryptocurrencies and blockchains has people speculating whether the technologies will lead to a **libertarian future**, in which governments and corporations lose their grip on centralized power, an **authoritarian future**, in which they tighten that grip, or **something in between**.

Yet, as he suggests what some of these libertarians perhaps didn't anticipate, however, was the extent to which governments and corporations would eventually begin embracing the technologies – particularly blockchain. Increasingly, state powers and big corps are recognizing the potential of blockchain to restructure their operations, making them more efficient, transparent and secure, and could – advertently or not – be solidifying their rule in the process.

So what we're seeing is the great global conglomerates and monopolies once again consolidating power and overtaking the very resistance of cognitive inventors and knowledge workers through a process of cooptation and immersive buy in to the very systems that were meant to resist such elite powers to begin with.

The libertarians who pioneered blockchain aren't happy about this, as it goes against everything they believe the technology was created for (though some argue the intention was to sidestep state-backed currency systems, not replace them). As Ian Bogost writes in *The Atlantic*, "the irony would be tragic if it weren't also so frightening. The invitation to transform distributed-ledger systems into the ultimate tool of corporate and authoritarian control might be too great a temptation for human nature to forgo."

Winfield relates on corporate defender of the takeover of this technology. James Zdralek, a Montreal-based software designer for the global tech company SAP, believes the idea that blockchain could lead to total control is flawed because anything made up of individual units – including corporations and governments – cannot have a unified conscience that chooses good or evil. "It's like judging a group of mold – it either gives you cheese or anthrax," says Zdralek. "Either result was not the conscious choice of the group of mold cells."

Yet, as I've said above the whole point of algorithmic governance is that there never was any "conscious choice" – no free will or independence of judgement, and there is no unified or monolithic entity or power behind the proverbial conspiracy scene pulling the puppet strings either; rather, this whole world is oriented toward one thing "profits", and it is this very ubiquitous and pervasive engine of accumulation and surplus value that drives all corporations, as well as the techno-commercium that is producing the very tools we've spoken of. So there need be no conscious decision because as neuroscientist agree it is all done within the ubiquitous processes outside an conscious choice.

One can discover in many works such as *Neuroscience and the Economics of Decision Making* (Alessandro Innocenti ed.) that for the last two decades there has been a flourishing research carried out jointly by economists, psychologists and neuroscientists. This meltdown of competences has lead towards original approaches to investigate the mental and cognitive mechanisms involved in the way the economic agent collects, processes and uses information to make choices. This research field involves a new kind of scientist, trained in different disciplines, familiar in managing experimental data, and with the mathematical foundations of decision making. The ultimate goal of this research is to open the black-box to understand the behavioral and neural processes through which humans set preferences and translate these behaviours into optimal choices.

The point here is to understand every aspect of the brain and how it can be manipulated to serve the optimal choices of those systems of governance and techno-commercial processes to benefit the expanding power of global corporations. Politics and Nation States matter not to these larger entities, rather the stage-craft of nation and politics serves the corporate interests of the competing global entities. *Social Cognition* works on the collective ways in which the mental representations that people hold of their social world and the way that social information is processed, stored, and retrieved. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent of various ways to manipulate the masses in every nation, no matter what culture or social conditioning.

Antoinette Rouvroy in *Human Genes and Neoliberal Governance* outlines the knowledge-power relations in the post-genomic era and addressing the pressing issues of genetic privacy and discrimination in the context of neoliberal governance, this book demonstrates and explains the mechanisms of mutual production between biotechnology and cultural, political, economic and legal frameworks. She explores the social, political and economic conditions and consequences of this new 'perceptual regime'. In the second she pursues her analysis through a consideration of the impact of 'geneticization' on political support of the welfare state and on the operation of private health and life insurances. Genetics and neoliberalism, she argues, are complicit in fostering the belief that social and economic patterns have a fixed nature beyond the reach of democratic deliberation, whilst the characteristics of individuals are unusually plastic, and within the scope of individual choice and responsibility.

With the emergence of Human Enhancement or H++ or Transhumanism the elite seek to empower their own children with favorable adjustments and enhancements, breeding a new level of genetic superiority in their germlines. Eugenics is back with a vengeance. With the so called convergence technologies the power elite hope to consolidate their power base and build a new capitalist platform on techno-commercial footing that can carry us into a space-faring civilization.

Convergence in knowledge, technology, and society is the accelerating, transformative interaction among seemingly distinct scientific disciplines, technologies, and communities to achieve mutual compatibility, synergism, and integration, and through this process to create added value for societal benefit. It is a movement that is recognized by scientists and thought leaders around the world as having the potential to provide far-reaching solutions to many of today's complex knowledge, technology, and human development challenges. Four essential and interdependent convergence platforms of human activity are defined in the first part of this report: nanotechnology-biotechnology-information technology and cognitive science ("NBIC") foundational tools; Earth-scale environmental systems; human-scale activities; and convergence methods for societal-scale activities. The report then presents the main implications of convergence for human physical potential, cognition and communication, productivity and societal outcomes, education and physical infrastructure, sustainability, and innovative and responsible governance. As a whole, a new model for convergence is emerging in our time. To effectively take advantage of this potential, a proactive governance approach is suggested by these very powerful elite in many think-tanks and techno-commercial enterprises like Google and other global market leaders. The United States and its corporate overlords have been for sometime implementing a program aimed at focusing disparate R and D energies into a coherent activity – a "Societal Convergence Initiative".

The notion of a technocracy arose during the twentieth century but was lacking in the collusion of corporation, government, and academia, etc., which is no longer the case. With the demise of the humanistic learning systems that stood in its way, the privatizing of academic institutions that is occurring, and the specialized and compartmentalized forms of education and corporate promotion in these various learning institutions the very nature of converging on business, expertise, technology, and society through the very use of these social conditioning technologies is becoming all pervasive and will only continue down this course.

We've seen in recent years how masses of people can be swayed by emotion: anger, frustration, distrust in government and authority, etc. to the point that they are will to try anything to regain a sense of sanity and stability in their lives to the point they will allow a Authoritarian Leader to take charge and correct what was perceived as the weakness of other leaders. As Kathleen Taylor in her recent book , *Brainwashing* describes it, there are three approaches to mind-changing: by force, by stealth, and by direct brain manipulation technologies. The first two, as I describe in the book, use standard psychological processes; in this sense there is nothing unnatural about mind control. The aim is to isolate victims from their previous environment; control what they perceive, think, and do; increase uncertainty about previous beliefs; instill new beliefs by repetition; and employ positive and negative emotions to weaken former beliefs and strengthen new ones.²

As she puts it: "People can be persuaded to give up objective freedoms and hand over control of their lives to others in return for apparent freedoms—in other words, as long as they are aware of the freedoms they are gaining and either contemptuous, or altogether unaware, of the freedoms they are giving up." "The trick is to disable the brain's alarm system". (Brainwashing, p. 243)

Most of what she describes is the older mode of mind manipulation that has been used in many forms by many nations, terror groups, government security agencies, cults, etc. for centuries. The refinement has come in experimentation, use of pharmaceuticals, and social or mass psychology. Yet, in our time as technology displaces many of the decisioning processes we as humans have relied on as independent agents, with our belief in a Self-Subject this is no longer the same. For decades the very notion of the liberal Subject and Self has come under scrutiny and a propaganda mission from both the corporate controlled sciences and academy undermining the whole democratic political subject as we have come to know it. Without a sense of Self and subjectivity we no longer have a center from within which to provide normative claims or political judgments. If as many neuroscientists suggest the Self is an illusion and delusion then our whole political democratic system of government is no longer viable in the tradition of Enlightenment founded on Reason, etc., and the Lockean and Rousseauian notions along with the Mills utilitarianism fall by the wayside. The destruction of Secular modernity is at an end if these neuroscientists and academic thinkers are correct.

Are advances in science and technology enabling us in the foreseeable future to create digital minds. The notion of exponential growth is a pattern built deep into the scheme of life, but technological change now promises to outstrip even evolutionary change. Many neuroscientists in collusion with engineers are beginning to reverse engineer the brain with various EU and U.S. Brain initiatives. We may see in the future that technological and scientific advances ranging from the discovery of laws that control the behavior of the electromagnetic fields to the development of computers will change the very nature of what it means to be human. Some even see in this process of artificial selection the continuance of natural selection mutating into the ultimate algorithm, with genetics and the evolution of the central nervous system, along with the role of computer imaging which has played in understanding and modeling the brain. Having considered the behavior of the unique system that creates a mind, neuroscientists are turning to an unavoidable question: Is the human brain the only system that can host a mind? If digital minds come into existence — it is difficult to argue that they will not — what are the social, legal, and ethical implications? Will digital minds be our partners, or our rivals?

In an age when so many things are happening at once will the decisions like this that could have dire implications for the species of homo sapiens be made for us, taken out of our hands as we are manipulated and distracted by war, climate change, terror, fear, anger, political and social unrest that keeps us from thinking clearly on these things? All the while the power elites continue investing and making these decisions outside the political and social systems of nation, culture, or the ethico-religious dimensions of our planetary civilization.

1. Berardi, Francesco. Futurability: The Age of Impotence and the Horizon of Possibility
2. Kathleen Taylor. Brainwashing: The science of thought control. Oxford University Press; 2 edition (April 23, 2017)

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